

Notices

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This section of the FEDERAL REGISTER contains documents other than rules or proposed rules that are applicable to the public. Notices of hearings and investigations, committee meetings, agency decisions and rulings, delegations of authority, filing of petitions and applications and agency statements of organization and functions are examples of documents appearing in this section.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Submission for OMB Review; Comment Request

March 14, 1997.

The Department of Agriculture has submitted the following information collection requirement(s) to OMB for review and clearance under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, Public Law 104-13. Comments regarding (a) whether the collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information will have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the agency's estimate of burden including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility and clarity of the information to be collected; (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond, including through the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology should be addressed to: Desk Officer for Agriculture, Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, Office of Management and Budget (OMB), Washington, D.C. 20503 and to Department Clearance Office, USDA, OCIO, Mail Stop 7602, Washington, D.C. 20250-7602. Comments regarding these information collections are best assured of having their full effect if received within 30 days of this notification. Copies of the submission(s) may be obtained by calling (202) 720-6204 or (202) 720-6746.

An agency may not conduct or sponsor a collection of information unless the collection of information displays a currently valid OMB control number and the agency informs potential persons who are to respond to the collection of information that such persons are not required to respond to the collection of information unless it

displays a currently valid OMB control number.

• Rural Housing Service

Title: 7 CFR 1965-B, Security Servicing for Multiple Family Housing Loans.

OMB Control Number: 0575-0100.

Summary: The information collection allows RHS to respond to account servicing actions such as transfers, reamortizations, delinquencies, subordinations and junior liens.

Need and Use of the Information: The information is used to assure compliance with the regulations for projects financed with Multiple Family Housing loan and grant funds.

Description of Respondents: Individuals or households; Business or other for-profit; Not-for-profit institutions; Farms; State, Local or Tribal Government.

Number of Respondents: 945.

Frequency of Responses: Reporting: On occasion.

Total Burden Hours: 1,587.

Donald Hulcher,

Deputy Departmental Clearance Officer.

[FR Doc. 97-7043 Filed 3-19-97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-01-M

Commodity Credit Corporation

Notice of Request for Extension and Revision of a Currently Approved Information Collection

AGENCY: Commodity Credit Corporation.

ACTION: Notice and request for comments.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, this notice announces the Commodity Credit Corporation's (CCC) intention to request an extension for, and revision of, an information collection process currently in effect related to the Standards for Approval of Warehouses for Cotton.

DATES: Comments must be submitted on or before May 19, 1997, to be assured consideration.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION OR COMMENTS:

All comments concerning this notice should be addressed to Mr. Steven Closson, Chief, Storage Contract Branch, Warehouse and Inventory Division, Farm Service Agency, United States Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington DC 20250-0553 FAX (202) 690-3213.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title: Standards for Approval of Warehouses for Cotton.

OMB Control Number: 0560-0010.

Expiration Date of Approval: January 31, 1997.

Type of Request: Extension and Revision of a Currently Approved Information Collection.

Abstract: The CCC Charter Act, authorizes CCC to enter into storage agreements with commercial warehouse operators for the storage of CCC-owned or CCC-loaned cotton. 15 U.S.C. 714 note. The information collected under Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Number 0560-0010, as identified above, allows CCC to effectively maintain a list of approved warehouses for the storage of cotton as covered by 7 CFR part 1427—Standards for Approval of Warehouses for Cotton or Cotton Linters.

The forms covered by this collection are the Cotton Storage Agreement (Storage Agreement) and supporting documents that allows the warehouse operator to demonstrate to CCC his ability to meet the standards for approval necessary for the CCC contracting officer to enter into or continue an existing storage agreement with a warehouse operator. The Storage Agreement is a contract for services between CCC and the warehouse operator and spells out the terms that will prevail during the period that the warehouse and CCC chose to conduct business. During this period the warehouse is listed on a CCC maintained List of Approved Warehouses and eligible producers may obtain price support loans for cotton stored at the warehouse. The forms are furnished to interested warehouse operators to secure and record information regarding the agreement and permits the warehouse operator to submit the storage and handling rates to be paid by CCC should CCC or eligible producers use the warehouse for the storage and handling of eligible cotton.

Estimate of Burden: The record keeping requirements in this clearance are normal business records and, therefore, have no burden. Public reporting burden for this information collection is estimated to average 1.06 hours per response.

Respondents: Business or other for-profit.

Estimated Number of Responses: 400.

Estimated Number of Responses per Respondent: 3.265.

Estimated Total Annual Burden on Respondents: 1,395.

Comments are sought on these requirements including: (a) whether the continued collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of CCC contracting activities, including whether the information will have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of CCC's estimate of burden including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used; (c) enhancing the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; (d) minimizing the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond, including using appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology. Comments should be sent to the Desk Officer for Agriculture, Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, Office of Management and Budget, Washington, D.C. 20503 and to Mr. Steven Closson, Chief, Storage Contract Branch, Warehouse and Inventory Division, Farm Service Agency, United States Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington DC 20250-0553. Copies of the information collection may be obtained from Mr. Closson at the above address.

All responses to this notice will be summarized and included in the request for OMB approval. All comments will also become a matter of public record.

Signed at Washington, DC on March 12, 1997.

Bruce R. Weber,

Executive Vice President, Commodity Credit Corporation.

[FR Doc. 97-6786 Filed 3-19-97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-05-P

Forest Service

Commonality of the Chemistries Involved in Moisture, Biological, Ultraviolet, and Thermal Degradations of Wood; Notice of Intent To Form a Consortium

Program Description—Purpose. The USDA, Forest Service, Forest Products Laboratory (FPL) is seeking industrial partners to form a Consortium dedicated to understanding the commonality of the chemistries involved in moisture, biological, ultraviolet, and thermal degradations of wood, and developing basic approaches to protecting wood from degradation without loss of other basic properties, under the authority of the Federal Technology Transfer Act of 1986 (15 U.S.C. 3710a).

An industrial partner may be a Federal Agency, university, private business, nonprofit organization, research or engineering entity, or combination of the above.

A summary of the current status of preventing wood degradation is as follows:

(a) Wood is a three-dimensional, polymeric composite made up primarily of cellulose, hemicelluloses, and lignin. These polymers, along with extractives and inorganics, and the matrix they are in, make up the cell wall and are responsible for the characteristics, properties and performance of wood.

When considering wood as a long term engineering material it must be remembered that wood is a hygroscopic resource that was designed to perform, in nature, in a wet environment and that nature is programmed to recycle wood in a timely way through biological, thermal, aqueous, photochemical, chemical, and mechanical degradations.

There are four basic chemical reactions involved in all the degradation reactions of wood: Oxidation, hydrolysis, reduction, and dehydration. Because of the similarities in degradation chemistry, all these degradation reactions will be studied together.

Cell wall polymers are responsible for the properties of wood. Wood changes dimension with changing moisture content because the cell wall polymers contain hydroxyl and other oxygen-containing groups that attract moisture through hydrogen bonding. The hemicelluloses are mainly responsible for moisture sorption, but the accessible cellulose, noncrystalline cellulose, lignin, and surface of crystalline cellulose also play minor parts to major roles. Moisture swells the cell wall and the wood expands until the cell wall is saturated with water (fiber saturation point (FSP)). Beyond this saturation point, moisture exists as free water in the void structure and does not contribute to further expansion. The process is reversible and the wood shrinks as it loses moisture below the FSP.

Wood exposed to moisture frequently is not a equilibrium and has wet areas and drier areas. This exacerbates the moisture problem resulting in differential swelling followed by cracking and/or compression set. Over the long term, wood undergoes cyclic swelling and shrinking as moisture levels change resulting in more severe moisture effects than those encountered under steady moisture conditions.

Wood is degraded biologically because organisms recognize the carbohydrate polymers (mainly the hemicelluloses) in the cell wall and

have both specific and non-specific chemical and specific enzyme systems capable of hydrolyzing these polymers into digestible units. Biodegradation of both the matrix and the high molecular weight cellulose weakens the fiber cell wall. Strength is lost as the matrix and cellulose polymer undergo degradation through oxidation, hydrolysis, and dehydration reactions. As degradation continues, removal of cell wall content results in weight loss.

Wood exposed outdoors undergoes photochemical degradation caused by ultraviolet radiation. This degradation takes place primarily in the lignin component, which is responsible for the characteristic color changes. The surface becomes richer in cellulose content as the lignin degrades. In comparison to lignin, cellulose is much less susceptible to ultraviolet radiation degradation. After the lignin has been degraded, the poorly bonded carbohydrate-rich fibers erode easily from the surface, which exposes new lignin to further degradative reactions. In time, the "weathering" process causes the surface of the composite to become rough and can account for a significant loss in surface fibers.

Wood burns because the cell wall polymers undergo pyrolysis reactions with increasing temperature to give off volatile, flammable gasses. The hemicelluloses and cellulose polymers are degraded by heat much before the lignin. The lignin and carbohydrate components contribute to char formation, and the charred layer helps insulate the composite from further thermal degradation.

The idea of protecting wood in adverse environments dates back to early human history. Perhaps the earliest reference is in the Old Testament (Genesis 6:14) when God instructed Noah to build an ark of gopher wood (a naturally durable and hard wood) and cover it inside and outside with pitch (for both water repellency and decay protection).

Ancient civilization in Burma, China, Greece, and Italy used various animal, vegetable and mineral oils, tars, pitches or charring to preserve wood. Sometime during the second half of the eighteenth century, the science of wood preservation started with a search for toxic chemicals that could be used to treat wood to stop decay. The time line might include: mercuric chloride first used in 1705, patented in 1832; copper sulfate first introduced in 1767, patented in 1839; zinc chloride first used in 1815; creosote first used in 1836; copper, chromium and arsenic salts introduced in the early 1900's; and pentachlorophenol first introduced in